



May 15, 2013

Honorable Phil Isenberg
Chairman, Delta Stewardship Council
980 Ninth Street, Suite 1500
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Isenberg:

On behalf of the Natural Resources Agency and its boards, conservancies and departments, along with the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) team, I write to convey our support for the adoption of the Delta Plan and certification of the Environmental Impact Report.

The Delta Stewardship Council should be commended for its significant achievements in preparing the Delta Plan and its associated regulations and environmental documentation. Through the many months of deliberations, and the multiple drafts that have informed the effort, the council has demonstrated a commitment to transparency and flexibility in creating a document that thoroughly summarizes the challenges we all face in balancing the competing interests in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. The Delta Plan proposed for the council's adoption establishes a solid foundation for achieving the co-equal goals defined by the Legislature in the Delta Reform Act.

With the 2009 passage of the Delta Reform Act, the Legislature established for the first time a clear vision of the importance of the Delta to all Californians, and articulated the need to both protect and restore to health its sensitive ecosystem, and secure a reliable water supply for the cities, businesses and farms that rely on the Delta for this critical resource. These goals are to be achieved while recognizing the needs of those who live in the Delta and those who take advantage of its many resources. The mechanism that the Legislature created to further define this vision and provide a guide for achieving it is the Delta Plan, and we believe that the Delta Stewardship Council has succeeded in meeting the Legislature's mandate with the document proposed for adoption by the council.

A comprehensive Delta solution must encompass three important elements, each of which is necessary to a successful comprehensive water supply reliability and ecosystem restoration solution:

1. Ambitious actions to promote local reliance through conservation, recycling, and alternative supplies that serve to reduce future reliance on exports and diversions from the Delta watershed.

The Delta Plan references related programs and projects that will further advance the co-equal goals. There are several programs already underway which have made significant progress on these necessary actions. These actions are included in the California Water Plan and urban and agricultural water management plans, and are supported and facilitated by the Integrated Regional Water Management Planning program managed by the Department of Water Resources.

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Water storage and levee maintenance projects are also part of the statewide water resources management activities conducted by local and state agencies, and their relationship to meeting the co-equal goals is also noted in the Delta Plan.

2. Physical changes within the Delta to avoid disruption of water supplies by catastrophic events and large-scale habitat restoration needed to support a healthy delta ecosystem, such as those being proposed through the BDCP process.

BDCP will be incorporated into the Delta Plan upon approval by the Department of Fish and Wildlife as a Natural Community Conservation Plan. The BDCP will also constitute a major achievement in meeting the co-equal goals of the Delta Reform Act. The BDCP will address directly the need for reliable conveyance systems for water supplies for 25 million Californians and 3 million acres of the nation's most productive farmland, designed to address the threats to that reliability from earthquakes, floods, and sea level rise by implementing 22 conservation measures. The BDCP will also serve to address the goal of Delta ecosystem protection and restoration through measures to restore and protect the habitat of 57 terrestrial and aquatic species, the health of which is directly tied to the reliability of Delta water supplies and the Delta economy. The BDCP will meet the requirements of state and federal statutes for specifying the operations of the water supply facilities in the Delta to balance the needs of all uses of water in the Delta, including protecting threatened and endangered species.

3. Flow and water quality objectives that are protective of fish, wildlife and agricultural beneficial uses while remaining consistent with state law protecting senior water rights holders and the needs of areas and watershed of origin.

The State Water Board is currently considering proposed amendments to the Bay-Delta Water Quality Plan that will establish flow objectives and a program of implementation. The proposed amendments will also include revised salinity objectives and a program of implementation for the protection of agricultural beneficial uses. The State Water Board has recently released a draft Substitute Environmental Document (SED) for public comment that analyzes the environmental effects of these proposed amendments along with certain economic factors. The State Water Board has also begun evaluating other potential amendments to the Bay-Delta Water Quality Plan for the protection of fish and wildlife beneficial uses.

By adopting this Delta Plan, the Delta Stewardship Council will provide a balanced framework for achieving the co-equal goals through implementation of county and municipal general plans, water quality control plans, habitat conservation plans, and other regulatory and guidance documents that address the uses of the Delta's resources. This framework also serves to underline the critical reality that flow and water quality protections, more efficient conservation and management of existing supplies, and improvements to the physical habitat and conveyance infrastructure in the Delta go hand in hand.

Congratulations on preparing a sound Delta Plan. We look forward to working with the council to implement its provisions.

Sincerely,



John Laird
Secretary for Natural Resources